

Sierra Nevada Conservancy launches river cleanup website

Volunteers needed for Sept. 25 effort

By Gloria Young, Journal Staff Writer

8/4/2010

Just when summer winds down in the recreation areas, volunteer organizations will be lining up to clear all the leftover debris.

Registration for the second annual Great Sierra River Cleanup opened last Wednesday with the launch of a new website that enables users to easily connect to a watershed site of their choice.

"The first Great Sierra River Cleanup was a tremendous success last year, and early indications suggest we could double the number of participants this year and cover just about every watershed in the Sierra," Sierra Nevada Conservancy Executive Officer Jim Branham said in a press release. "With 65 percent of California's water coming from the Sierra, it's exciting to see so many neighbors and friends joining in to practice good stewardship of this valuable resource."

The cleanup will be from 9 a.m. to noon Saturday, Sept. 25. It is held in partnership with the California Coastal Cleanup Day (now in its 26th year), making it the largest one-day volunteer effort in California.

So far, five organizations have registered in Placer County, including Protect American River Canyons, Upper American River Foundation and the Placer Land Trust.

Eric Peach, on the board of PARC, will spearhead the cleanup of the American River confluence area.

"We'll be working in the area of main use in the Auburn State Recreation Area," he said. "We'll also be cleaning up underneath the Auburn-Foresthill Bridge."

The cleanup is nothing new to PARC, which has been scouring the area of debris twice a year for the past 25 years. PARC works with California State Parks in the cleanups, and now, coordinating with the Sierra Nevada Conservancy provides another boost to the effort.

"They bring additional resources and they utilize a far-reaching network of volunteers who come to the cleanup, so it is a good collaboration," Peach said.

The California Highway Patrol is also involved, bringing in a helicopter to airlift the heavier trash.

"We fill net bags full of larger items that are too heavy to carry out in plastic bags," Peach said. "(The helicopter) flies the bags over the confluence area to where the Dumpsters are located. Recology supplies the Dumpsters free, so that's nice."

PARC also will send teams into outlying areas of the Auburn State Recreation Area to collect trash and bring it back to a central location.

But there are other areas that need volunteers.

"Ponderosa bridge needs to be covered and Yankee Jims and Upper Clementine," Peach said. "If there are service clubs that have members or school clubs or groups like that, they can just come on down to the confluence and we'll set them up with trash bags and grabbers, and we have some snacks and stuff like that. Then they can go out and clean up and come back, and we'll sort everything and recycle things that can be recycled. The rest will go into the Dumpster."

Recology does additional recycling at its sites, too.

At the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, Brittany Juergenson is overseeing the signup effort.

"Actually, we're always open to having more people to coordinate a cleanup in their area," she said. "If there are groups interested in doing cleanup on other stretches of the American River, we'd love to have it. We'll have them coordinate with Eric Peach because he's so familiar with the river."

Although the focus is on the rivers, the scope goes far behind that.

"Ultimately, the goal is to get the garbage out of the watershed," she said. "If you're working to collect garbage anywhere, it's going to help. That's the ultimate goal."

Juergenson recommends volunteers register with their local group as soon as possible, but the registration will remain open until the day before the cleanup, she said.

The list of participating organizations this year is still growing, and some of the sites are yet to be determined. Individuals and organizations interested in coordinating their own cleanup are encouraged to get in touch with the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, conservancy information officer Pete Dufour said in the press release.

In the Sierra alone last year, some 3,500 volunteers from more than 100 community groups removed more than 130 tons of trash and recyclables from Sierra rivers. The effort spanned 20 counties and more than 500 river miles, netting appliances, cans, tires, furniture, cigarette butts and plastic waste, officials said.

Reach Gloria Young at gloriay@goldcountrymedia.com.

For more information see [www. sierranevada.ca.gov](http://www.sierranevada.ca.gov) or call Brittany Juergenson at (530) 823-4670.

Confluence area cleanup: Call Eric Peach, Protect American River Canyons, at (530) 855-8878